DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 110 833 CE 004 657

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TITLE A Personality Development Interpretation of Employability and Disadvantaged Status with Remedial Implications: Counseling Services Report No. 21.
INSTITUTION Mountain-Plains Education and Economic Development Program, Inc., Glasgow AFB, Mont.
PUB DATE Dec 74
NOTE 22p.; For related documents, see CE 004 655-6; Revision and update of Counseling Services Report No. 11

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Rating Scales; Disadvantaged Groups; Individual Characteristics; Personality Assessment; *Personality Development; Personality Studies; *Personality Tests; *Personality Theories; Psychological Evaluation; Rural Population; Student Characteristics
IDENTIFIERS Mountain Plains Program

ABSTRACT

Tracing problems observed among the Mountain-Plains student population, a trend of apparently improper or arrested personality development emerges. Observations indicate that a majority of the student population does not possess normally developed trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, sense of identity, or ability to develop intimate relationships, nor have most (in any way other than in production of children) engaged in generativity. In order to test these observations, the entering student population from summer 1973 to spring 1974, all of whom were young adult family members of average intelligence and defined as rural disadvantaged, were administered two instruments designed to measure personality traits and the basic constructs of self-actualization. The students' test results were compared with adult norms selected from the respective test manuals. The test results indicated that Mountain-Plains students scored below normal in objective measures of trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, and intimacy. While the results do not irrefutably support the arrested personality development interpretation of personal/personality problems with the population under study, the indicators are extremely strong in favor of that interpretation. Supplementary tables provide Ericksonian Ego Qualities and Age Periods, selected test scales, and personality development of Mountain-Plains students versus norm groups. (JR)

ED110833

JUL 28 1975

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An Affective Evaluation Study

A Personality Development Interpretation of Employability and Disadvantaged Status with Remedial Implications:

Counseling Services Report No. 21
(Revision and Update of
Counseling Services Report No. 11)

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A PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT INTERPRETATION OF EMPLOYABILITY AND DISADVANTAGED STATUS WITH REMEDIAL IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The vast array of programs - WIN, CAP, TEAM, Job Corps, etc. ad. infinitum, and literature (e.g. Doeringer, 1969; Allen, 1970; Chertow, 1974) focusing on the disadvantaged during the past decade reached a concensus on only two points; first, that the disadvantaged experience multiple interacting problems, and second, that impacting these problems proves to be a more complex and difficult task than expected. With the exception of the Studies on the Self-Concept and Rehabilitation series by Fitts and associates (1969-72) and Miskimins and Baker's (1973) work, most programs and interpretations of (and since) the "Great Society" lack a theory base which would allow systematic conceptualization of multiple interacting problems. Without such a theory base, the difficulty of sorting problems and establishing appropriate program objectives, making optimum resource allocations (assignment of treatment priorities), and doing so in a cost beneficial fashion becomes difficult and perhaps impossible.

While the works of Fitts and Miskimins and Baker perform a great service in documenting and interpreting both the fact and nature of self-concept problems in disadvantaged populations, little is offered that allows theoretical interpretation of the processes leading to poor self-concept.[1] At Mountain-Plains, observation of the behavior of members of the resident disadvantaged families by classroom and occupational instructors, day care and home management instructors, and counselors again

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[1] As defined by Fitts, self-concept is similiar to Erickson's (1963) identity formation, Maslow's (1954, 1970) self-actualization, and Seeman's (1959) personal integration.

led to the conclusion that self-concept/identity formation/personal integration was a (and probably the) major problem of the disadvantaged population under treatment. However, this knowledge proved insufficient for developing comprehensive treatment objectives or strategies. Further theoretical models were applied to observed behaviors. Although elements of the personal/personality problems observed are interpretable to some extent in various theoretical frameworks, including those of Freud (1960), Sullivan (1963), and Harvey et al. (1961), Erickson's (1963) theory provided what appeared to be the best theoretical "fit" for explaining observations.

An excellent summary of Erickson is provided by Rappoport (1971), as follows:

> "Erickson's chronological framework for ego development emphasizes how a person's sense of identity evolves during the typical life cycle. His discussion involves the "ego qualities" that emerge at various "ages" or developmental periods. The life cycle is divided into eight periods. For each period Erickson gives the particular ego quality that must appear for the person's sense of identity to develop properly. There is a "crisis" during each age period which takes the form of a conflict between two alternative ego qualities, one being the quality required for a healthy, normal ego development and the other being the quality associated with abnormal development. The crisis is resolved for most persons when the healthy quality prevails over the unhealthy one."

Basic to the Ericksonian viewpoint is the idea that proper development becomes more difficult when not accomplished in the proper age/stage sequence.

Insert Table 1 about here

Tracing problems observed among the Mountain-Plains student population[2], a trend of apparently improper or arrested personality development emerges. Observations indicate that a majority of the student population do not possess normally developed trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, sense of identity or ability to develop intimate relationships nor have most (in any way other than in production of children) engaged in generativity.[3] The following section elaborates observations and theoretical correlations gleaned from discussions with instructors and counselors as regards their observations of student behavior.

Observations and Theoretical Interpretations

In general, child care practices among Mountain-Plains students have been observed as contrary to those generally accepted as appropriate. Often infants are not fed or fondled regularly. Since child rearing practices are largely learned by observing one's own parents with younger siblings, or the practices of friends and relatives, it is not unreasonable to assume that the population as a whole received similar treatment as young children. According to the theoretical model, lack of regular fondling and feeling during infancy will tend to produce a person who does not possess basic trust, but rather is mistrustful. Mistrust of spouses, friends and staff was observed to be a general characteristic of the Mountain-Plains population. Prediction: Mountain-Plains students will rate below adult norms on objective measures of/related to "trust".

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[2] Because the precise elements of employability are not defined, the assumption is made that since the overriding characteristic for which the population is selected is unemployment/underemployment, that non-normative characteristics of the population explain/contribute-to-the-explanation-of the disadvantaged/low employability status of the population. (Two-thirds of Mountain-Plains students are "poverty families" as per the OEO definition.)

[3] As the vast majority of students is under the age of 41, development in the ego integrity stage is not discussed.

"Potty training" has also been observed to be a traumatic time and experience for Mountain-Plains students and their children. Training is rarely done consistently and often involves use of adversive techniques rather than rewards for eliciting desired behavior. A traumatic potty training period, according to Ericksonian theory, will tend to produce a person who has developed a great deal of self-doubt and shame. Self-concept and self-confidence have been observed as a major problem with Mountain-Plains students. Prediction: Mountain-Plains students will rate low on objective measures of/related to "autonomy".

Appropriate conquest/manipulation goal objects are not typically available to children of Mountain-Plains families. Again, assuming: 1) similar situations existed with the Mountain-Plains parents during their own childhood, 2) that opportunities for proper initiative taking were not available to them (as often it is not available to their children), and 3) that when improper initiatives were taken resulting in destruction of property or harm to the child, harsh punishment was dealt out (as is often the case with Mountain-Plains children), then one would expect a population which is very reluctant to take initiative. This is, in fact, the case with Mountain-Plains students. Most take little initiative, particularly as regards dealing with "authority figures", and when initiative is taken, Mountain-Plains students appear to be fearful of punishment.[4] Prediction: Mountain-Plains students will rate low on objective measures of/related to "initiative".

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[4] It should be noted that as adults past initiatives that were undertaken by this population have met frequent failure. This trait is, therefore, as easily explained in purely behavioral terms as conditioning. Paradoxically, the action of choosing to participate in the Mountain-Plains Program is an act of initiative and so it seems that there may be different types of initiative dependent on different situations.

There appears to be little feeling among Mountain-Plains students that they possess the ability to modify their environment or life situation by employing the basic technology of their own personality and society. Students appear to have feelings of inferiority as opposed to being industrious. This might be expected when it is realized that the basic tools for survival in American society are English language and mathematics skills; both of which tend to have a low level of development among many Mountain-Plains students. Lack of these particular skills (math and English) has been identified by Brofenbrenner (1973), among others, as a major block to adult success. Likewise, social and interpersonal skills are observed to be poorly developed. Prediction: Mountain-Plains will rate low on objective measures of/related to "industry".

The Mountain-Plains student has now been traced in terms of his probable mean personality development to age 12. The average student at age 12 has probably mastered few or none of his developmental stage conflicts appropriately. Thus the 12 year old approaches puberty and adolescence (a time at which his personal, sexual, and vocational role identity need to be developed and defined) already carrying with him a heavy complement of uncompleted developmental tasks and lacking both the technological skills to develop vocational role identity and the personal ego qualities prerequisite to development of personal/sexual identity. That role identity is not well developed in Mountain-Plains students is illustrated by the usual statements made by students that they want to "make something" of themselves. The frightening implication of this frequently verbalized statement is that the students tend to perceive themselves as "nothing," as without valued identifications.

Personal role identity in terms of masculinity and femininity (sexual identity) also appears to be poorly developed. Possessive attitudes towards spouses and children are rampant. Males, in particular, seem to need constant reinforcers in terms of "masculine" activities, (e.g. drinking with the boys, shooting pool, sexual conquest). Prediction: Mountain-Plains students will rate low on objective measures of/related to "identity".

Intimate relationships have in general not been developed. Most students still maintain formal and authoritarian (as opposed to intimate) relationships with their parents. Friendships are few. Mistrust is high. Husband-wife relationships most often appear to be related to simply meeting social role expectations as opposed to being true intimate relationships. Prediction: Mountain-Plains students will rate low on objective measures of/related to "intimacy".

Most students have fulfilled the generativity stage in terms of the root definition in that most have children. However, a broader interpretation of Ericksonian productivity includes creativity and productivity in one's work. This is probably particularly important for the male as work productivity and products are highly valued in this society. Also, the rewards of generativity in terms of children are often seen not to fully accrue to students (male students especially) in that relationships with their children seem to more often be based on possessiveness and authority than on intimacy. Having not attained: 1) the personal development in terms of previous ego stages, 2) the cognitive skills that allow one to be fully productive, 3) feelings of reward either in relationships with child, wife or extended family, or 4) productivity in economic/career activities; Mountain-Plains students (average age of 26) are finding empty roles rather than intimate relationships and stagnation

rather than productivity. Most have never (or if ever, only for brief periods) achieved a true stage of productivity.

An appropriate focus for a program whose target population has characteristics as described, would seem to be the development of absent ego qualities in order to provide a basis for productive functioning in society. However, as mentioned, the observations reported are from interview data with instructors and counselors, and it is not quantative.[5] Full confidence in interpretation requires objective support. Thus, trait measures were selected and data collected to test the prediction of subnormal scores in the six developmental areas.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Subjects are students who entered the Mountain-Plains Program from mid/late summer, 1973, to early spring, 1974 (N=319/397)[6] and includes all students entering during this period except for a few (around two percent - mostly married women) who were not tested due to administrative difficulties. All subjects are young (average age of 26) adult family members (the Mountain-Plains

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[5]Observations by Dr. Richard Manley in Mountain-Plains' Career Guidance area also indicate an unusually large segment of the population to be "arrested" in Super's "fantasy" stage of career development.

[6] Testing with the POI was begun about a month before the 16 PF - thus the N for POI subjects is larger.

population has been about 9% single female heads-of-household and the remainder married couples) of average intelligence (average GATB G score of 98) and defined as rural disadvantaged as per the Mountain-Plains entrance criteria (Mountain-Plains, 1973). These criteria are typical descriptors of disadvantaged populations with two qualifications, rural origin, and constitution of a family unit, and two major exceptions, exclusion of severe medical problems, and exclusion of illiterates.

Instrumentation

Scales from the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, Form E (16 PF) and the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) were selected as indicators of level of development of Erickson's ego qualities as outlined in Table 1. The 16 PF is a comprehensive measure of psychological traits developed by Cattel et al. (1970) using factor analytic techniques. The 16 PF Form E used in this study (Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, 197[illegible]) is an experimental low literate form of the 16 PF designed to be equivalent to earlier versions of the instrument. The POI was developed conceptually by Shostrum (1963, 1966) to measure the basic constructs of self-actualization. Descriptions of selected scales given in Tables 2 and 3 are quoted verbatum from descriptions of the respective test authors/publishers.

Insert Table 2 about here

Insert Table 3 about here

Design

The design is a static group comparison comparing Mountain-Plains students to adult norms selected from the respective test manuals. The simple analysis of variance is used for all POI scales and for the 16 PF C, G, H, and Q_2 scales as these have previously been found not to be sensitive to the sex variable with the subject population (Conrad, 1974a; Pollack and Conrad, 1974). A two dimensional analysis of variance using unweighted means (group-by-sex) is used for comparisons involving the 16 PF L and O scales as these were found to be sex sensitive in the studies cited.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Trust

Subjects are indicated to take a relatively less positive view of human nature (POI Nc) and to be less trusting (16 PF L) than reference subjects. Mountain-Plains students do score below normal on objective measures of trust.

Autonomy

Subjects are found to be more reliant on the views of others for support and direction (POI I), but less group dependent (16 PF Q_2) than reference subjects. As the POI I scale shows the higher W^2 (.23 versus .01), and is more appropriately referenced (against normal adults whereas the 16 PF Q_2 scale is referenced against rehabilitation clients), it is concluded that Mountain-Plains students do indicate subnormal development of autonomy as indicated by objective measures.

Initiative

Results indicate that subjects are less venturesome (16 PF H) and more apprehensive (16 PF O) than reference subjects. It is concluded that subjects do rate below normal on objective measures related to initiative. However, the sex effect, the sex-by-group interaction, and the means (Table 4) show this norm departure on the 16 PF O scale to be a function of the scores of female subjects.

Industry

Subjects are indicated to have lower feelings of self-worth (POI Sr), to be less able to focus on current tasks/experience (POI Tc) and to be less conscientious (16 PF G) than reference subjects. Objective measures do indicate a subnormal development of the quality "Industry".

Identity

Subjects are seen to be less flexible in applying values (POI Ex), less acceptant of themselves with weakness (POI Sa) and less emotionally stable (16 PF C) than reference norms. Thus subjects are seen to rate below norms an objective measures related to identity. The POI Tc, I, and C scale scores (Table 4) also support this conclusion.

Intimacy

Subject scores indicate more difficulty in interacting with genuine warmth in interpersonal relationships (POI C) and less sensitivity to own needs and feelings (POI Fr) than normal adults. Subjects do score low on objective measures related to intimacy.

Insert Table 4 about here

DISCUSSION

Due to the large and unequal N's involved in the analysis, mere statistical significance of results should be interpreted with caution. However, the large w^2 estimates found on most of the POI comparisons do indicate considerable strength for the findings. Omega squared estimates for the 16 PF are all small - on the order 0.01. However, the reference norms for the 16 PF, Form E are derived from low-literate adults - most of whom were rehabilitation clients. Therefore, this norm population is not "normal" in that it does not represent normally functioning adults, but rather persons who have personal and/or employability difficulties. In this light, the small differences found on 16 PF scales take on greater meaning.

The unexpected finding on the 16 PF Q_2 scale may be a result of the nature of the reference group. However, it may also be that the type of self-sufficiency measured by the instruments itself is quite different. The act of moving from a familiar environment to the isolated unfamiliar environment of Mountain-Plains would seem to require some particular type of autonomy and/or initiative. For some reason, the Q_2 scale may be very sensitive to this particular type of self-sufficiency whereas the POI I scale is not.

Efforts too numerous to elaborate have been made to explain the phenomena of "poverty", "under employment", "low socio-economic class membership", etc. None of these have proven fully satisfactory. A developmentalist approach interpreting current status in terms of failure to appropriately resolve "ego quality" developmental crises thus emerges as especially strong. Not only does it give a

framework for interpreting overall problems, but it identifies trait strengths to explore in counseling and a guideline as to the order in which multiple problems might be appropriately addressed.

While the results do not irrefutably support the "arrested personality development" interpretation of personal/personality problems with the population under study, the indicators are extremely strong--especially the development and flow of the research itself from empirical observation to theoretical explanation to trait measurements. If the root problem in "disadvantaged status" is, in fact, "arrested personality development", then we would expect any approach to "problems" involved in this (or similar) populations that did not attend to insuring appropriate development of pre-generativity ego qualities will be an impotent tool that will produce only a random effect as regards any long-term improvement in socio-economic status. It would thus appear that a program which has such long range improvements as its goal should give close attention to personal/personality development as an integral (and perhaps as the central) part of that program.

That Erickson's theory again emerges as a strong vehicle for interpreting personal problems, and additionally, as apparently explanatory with reference to employability problems was predicted and expected. A secondary and unexpected outcome of this program of research in the current and previous studies (Conrad, 1974a; Conrad and McMahon, 1974) is emergence of the POI I, Tc, and C scales as particularly distinguishing between populations indicating a strong explanatory value for Maslow's self-actualization in interpreting needs in at least one underemployed population. Whereas many (including this author) have in the past written off self-actualization as vague and impractical, it might prove to be a key in explaining, and thus hopefully resolving, one current pressing social

problem. More work on the explanatory and remedial possibilities of applying both Erickson's and Maslow's[7] theories (and their interaction) would seem a most profitable area for investigation.

[7] In the introduction to the second edition of Motivation and Personality, Maslow (1970) limits his concept of self-actualization to adults alluding to need for previous development of such traits as identity and autonomy. The "striving for" nature of Maslow's "self-actualization" seems to have explanatory value within Erickson's "productivity" stage and beyond. The explanatory value of Erickson's theory for growth through childhood and adolescence, continuing with Maslow in the mid-twenties, and yielding to Maslow in middle age, appears powerful and worthy of pursuit by theorists.

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Table 1

Ericksonian Ego Qualities and Age Periods

EGO QUALITIES	CHRONOLOGICAL AGE
1. Basic Trust versus Basic Mistrust	0-1
2. Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt	2-3
3. Initiative versus Guilt	4-5
4. Industry versus Inferiority	6-12
5. Identity versus Role Confusion	13-18
6. Intimacy versus Isolation	19-25
7. Generativity versus Stagnation	26-40
8. Ego Integrity versus Despair	41+

NOTE: Qualities are quoted from section headings in Erickson (1963), Chapter 7.

Table 2

Selected 16PF Scales: Descriptions and Reliabilities

LOW SCORE	SCALE AND RELIABILITY*	HIGH SCORE
AFFECTED BY FEELINGS - emotionally less stable, easily upset (lower ego strength)	C (.70)	EMOTIONALLY STABLE, faces reality, calm, mature (higher ego strength)
EXPEDIENT - disregards rules, feels few obligations (weaker superego strength)	G (.65)	CONSCIENTIOUS, persevering, staid, moralistic (stronger superego strength)
SHY - restrained, timid, threat-sensative (threctia)	H (.83)	VENTURESOME, socially bold, uninhibited, spontaneous (Parmia)
TRUSTING - adaptable, free of jealousy, easy to get along with (Alaxia)	L (.47)	SUSPICIOUS, self-opinionated, hard to fool. (Protension)
SELF-ASSURED - confident, serene (untroubled adequacy)	O (.72)	APPREHENSIVE, self-reproaching, worrying, troubled (guilt proneness)
GROUP-DEPENDENT - a "joiner" and sound follower (group adherence)	Q (.70)	SELF-SUFFICIENT, prefers own decisions, resourceful (self-sufficiency)

*Equivalent Forms

Table 3

Selected POI Scales: Descriptions and Reliabilities

LOW SCORE	SCALE AND RELIABILITY*	HIGH SCORE
Lives in the past or future.	Tc Time Competence (.71)	Lives in the present.
Dependent; Seeks support of others' views	I Inner Directedness (.77)	Independent Self-Supportive
Flexible in application of values	Ex Existentiability (.82)	Rigid in application of values
Sensitive to own needs and feelings	Fr (.65)	Insensitive to own needs and feelings
Has low self-worth.	Sr Self-Regard (.71)	Has High self-worth.
Sees man as essentially evil.	Nc Nature of Man (.68)	Sees man as essentially good.
Has difficulty with warm interpersonal relationships.	C Capacity for Intimate Contact (.67)	Has warm interpersonal relationships.
Accepting of self in spite of weakness	Sa (.77)	Unable to accept self with weakness

*Test-Retest

Table 4

Personality Development of Mountain-Plains Students Versus Norm Groups

EGO QUALITY	INDICATOR TRAIT	MOUNTAIN-PLAINS STUDENTS M	MOUNTAIN-PLAINS STUDENTS SD	REFERENCE GROUP M	REFERENCE GROUP SD	REFERENCE GROUP Source	F*		w^2
ust	POI Nc	10.8	2.26	12.4	1.9	A	65.7		.10
	16PF L	3.75 (m)	2.02	3.10 (m)	1.68	B	18.3	(group)	.01
		3.20 (f)	1.68	3.07 (f)	1.81	C	10.1	(sex)	.01
							8.11	(sex by group)	.01
utonomy	POI I	74.8	11.3	87.2	13.6	A	164		.23
	16PF Q2	4.18	2.34	3.67	1.95	B + C	16.0		.01
tiative	16PF H	2.30	2.24	3.15	1.89	B + C	47.4		.03
	16PF O	4.36 (m)	1.98	4.44 (m)	1.78	B	17.8	(group)	.01
		5.91 (f)	1.87	5.03 (f)	1.81	C	130	(sex)	.07
							25.9	(sex by group)	.01
dustry	POI Tc	14.5	3.35	17.7	2.8	A	186		.25
	POI Sr	11.1	4.23	12.0	2.7	A	6.71		.01
	16PF G	4.78	1.92	5.83	1.70	B + C	91.7		.06
ntity	POI Ex	17.4	4.66	21.8	5.1	A	97.0		.15
	POI Sa	13.9	3.49	17.1	4.0	A	85.6		.13
	16PF C	3.51	1.84	3.96	1.85	B + C	15.1		.01
imacy	POI C	15.3	3.84	18.8	4.6	A	84.3		.13
	POI Fr	13.9	3.11	15.7	3.3	A	35.4		.07

ference A: Normal adult group reported by Shostrom (1966) N = 158.
ference B: Norm for all male subjects, mostly rehabilitation clients (Institute for Personality & Ability Testing, 1971) N = 715.
ference C: Norm for all female subjects, mostly rehabilitation clients (Institute for Personality & Ability Testing, 1971) N = 527.

ll F's are statistically significant, $p \leq 0.01$.

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